

What is a Historic Landmark?

A Historic Landmark means:

- Those buildings, objects, sites, or structures of the highest historical, cultural, architectural, or archaeological importance and whose demolition or destruction would constitute an irreplaceable loss to the quality of life and character of El Paso.
- Certain interior spaces designed or intended to be occupied as part of the structure of which are accessible to the public.

These elements and the property in which they are located are designed as historic by CC.

What is the Historic Landmark Commission (HLC)?

The Historic Landmark Commission (HLC) consists of nine members appointed by the Mayor and the City Representatives who have a particular interest or expertise in the field of historic preservation. The function of HLC is to establish criteria to be used in determining whether certain buildings, interiors, structures, sites, districts, areas, lands, and other objects should be designated as historic landmarks. Furthermore, it recommends to CC whether to approve or deny certificates of appropriateness and certificates of demolition or removal.

What is a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)?

A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is a document rendered by the HLC which is required to be issued prior to the issuance of a building permit, granted for the alteration, rehabilitation, construction, reconstruction, or demolition of a landmark structure, site, or any improvement in a historical district.

Planning, Research & Development Department

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City of El Paso

LAND DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION SERIES

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROCESS



Planning, Research
& Development Department

What is Historic Preservation?

Historic Preservation is the process by which districts, structures and sites of historical, cultural, architectural, archaeological, or educational significance are preserved, which otherwise, if demolished or destroyed, would constitute an irreplaceable loss to the quality of life and character of the City of El Paso.

Why do we want to preserve historic buildings and structures?

Through preservation of historic structures and spaces, the character and cultural significance of our City can be maintained.

What is a historic district?

A historic district means an area, urban or rural, residential or commercial, defined by City Council (CC), state, or federal authority that contains within definable geographic boundaries, elements of historic, cultural, or archaeological relevance contributing to the visual character of the area.

How do I know if my property is in a Historic District?

Historic Districts are designated by an "H" overlay on the Official Zoning Map for the City of El Paso.

How many Historic Districts are there in El Paso?

Currently there are nine Historic Districts in El Paso:

Austine Terrace	Manhattan Heights
Chihuahuita	Mission Trail
Downtown	Old San Francisco
Magoffin	Sunset Heights
Ysleta	

What criterion is used in approving work to be done on my property?

The HLC uses the design guidelines adopted by CC for a particular historic district. When no guidelines have been adopted for a particular district, the guidelines from the district most similar in character, design, materials, workmanship, and time of construction shall apply. When the preceding does not provide guidelines applicable to the project, then the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings shall apply.

What type of work can I do to my property?

Generally, interior work does not require Historic Review as long as no structural members affecting the facades are modified. Exterior work affecting the character, design, composition, form, or appearance requires a review from the Historic Landmark Commission (HLC) or Historic Preservation Staff in certain cases.

What do I need to submit for a Historic Review?

Prior to applying for a building permit for the exterior of a designated historic landmark, or a designated historic interior, the applicant shall submit a copy of all detailed plans, elevations, perspectives, specifications, and other documents pertaining to the work to the Planning, Research & Development Department, with the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

What other type of documentation is needed?

The applicant is required to submit current photographs of the subject property if none are on file, a generalized site plan, and a detailed site plan depending on whether the property is vacant or there are existing structures. Proof of ownership is also required.

What is the process for obtaining a COA?

A pre-application conference is encouraged for applicants seeking a COA from the HLC. At this meeting, the applicant is informed of the requirements needed to complete the application, the proposed timeline, and the application is logged in when all documentation has been submitted. Two HLC meetings are held monthly and applications and materials are due two weeks before each scheduled meeting.

The regular scheduled meetings of the HLC on the first and third Monday of the month. The item will be placed on the agenda in a regular meeting.

The Planning, Research & Development Department staff conducts field checks and takes photographs on the cases placed on the agenda and makes departmental recommendations based on the design standards for each particular district.

At the HLC meeting, the case is presented by the Department staff and discussion is held by the HLC along with public comments. Then, action is rendered based on the design guidelines for each district and the staff recommendation. Based on the action by the HLC, a COA is rendered or in its defect, an applicant may appeal to CC.

How long does this process take?

The timeline for a COA is approximately two and a half weeks, pending any postponement or delayed action by the HLC. All meeting notices are posted and are open to the public. Applicants or their representatives are strongly encouraged to appear before HLC to address any arising questions relevant to the proposed work.

What about minor work an routine maintenance?

Administrative Review will be conducted according to the Administrative Review Guidelines approved by CC and administered by the Planning, Research & Development Department for the following types of work:

- Landscape materials including vegetation, irrigation, and xeriscaping, in the front, rear, side yards, and parkways.
- New fencing on the front, rear and side yards.
- Wrought iron security coverings for windows and doors.
- Exterior accessibility ramps.
- Skylights.
- Off-premise and on-premise commercial and residential signs within historic districts.
- Replacement of garage or household exterior doors that match the original doors.
- Walkways, driveways, and aprons.
- Swimming pools in the rear yard.
- Routine maintenance, including but not be limited to: painting, re-roofing, repair of walks, driveways, fences, and installation of windows similar to the original in appearance and strength of purpose, regardless of construction

Administrative Reviews can be done in-house at the Planning, Research & Development Department during regular working hours: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

What if I do not agree with the HLC action of Staff Administrative Review?

Any applicant, the owner of any property located within 300 feet of any landmark; or the owner of any property within the same historic district who is aggrieved by a ruling of the HLC, may within fifteen days after such ruling, appeal to CC by filing written notice of appeal with the City Clerk. This will follow a public hearing to be held within sixty days to the filing of such notice of appeal. CC may, by a simple majority vote, uphold or overturn any ruling of the HLC.

If an applicant does not agree with the Planning Staff Administrative Review, he/she may appeal to the HLC by being placed on the regular agenda for the next HLC meeting.

Where can I find out about financial assistance to renovate my historic property?

There are various State and Federal grants that property owners can utilize through the Community Development Department—Housing Rehab Program. Some criteria needs to be met. For more information please contact the Community Development Department at (915) 541-4346.

Historic Preservation Process

